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SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/30/2018

TAGS: [LE](#) [MARR](#) [MAS](#) [MCAP](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [PHSA](#) [PM](#)
SUBJECT: LEBANON: ARMY MAKES HUMANITARIAN DEMINING A
PRIORITY

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4(a) and (b)

¶1. (C) Summary. Charge and Office of Defense Cooperation Chief visited three Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) sites on 30 June, including the Lebanese Mine Action Center (LMAC), the LAF Engineer Regiment, and the Mine Detecting Dog unit. The purpose of these visits was to publicly demonstrate the scope of U.S. support to humanitarian demining in Lebanon -- approximately \$10 million since 2006 -- and to inspect the equipment purchased through the Department of State's PM Bureau Weapons Removal and Abatement Program, currently executed by DynCorp Corporation. End Summary

¶2. (C) At the Lebanese Mine Action Center (LMAC), the Charge met with Brigadier General Mohamed Fehmi. To date, U.S. funding has assisted in clearing 4,092,569 square meters of land returned to productive and safe use, with an additional 789,803 square meters of land scheduled for clearance. The Government of Lebanon (GOL) contributes \$5.5 million per year to the LMAC budget. BG Fehmi discussed the need for increased future funding for victim assistance related to landmines and unexploded munitions. The LMAC plans to expand the scope of its responsibilities by opening an LMAC office, funded with the assistance of State/PM and DynCorp in Nabatiyeh in southern Lebanon. This office will be fully mission capable by January 2009 and is one component of a broader GOL plan to assume full responsibility from the United Nations for the humanitarian demining mission in Lebanon by then. Fehmi also discussed the importance of accurate and complete "strike data" from the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) in regard to the 2006 Israeli-Hizballah conflict.

¶3. (C) The Charge next visited the LAF Engineer Regiment and met with its Commander, Colonel Roland Abou Jaoudi. The Colonel briefed the capabilities and mission of his unit via a five minute film and then guided the Charge through a static display of his unit's diverse array of humanitarian demining equipment to include about one dozen new trucks -- such as Ford Superduty F250s, Toyota Landcruiser Ambulances, cargo vans, Ford Explorers, and Ford F150s -- out of a total of 62 trucks of various types that the USG has provided to the LMAC and Engineer Regiment. Abou Jaoudi also discussed the upcoming resumption in August 2008 of the U.S. NAVCENT maritime demining engagement that is surveying the multiple munitions sites in Lebanese territorial waters, the scope of which has yet to be determined. Abou Jaoudi also discussed the importance of the LAF acquiring armored bulldozers for future military operation in urban terrain. The Charge observed one LAF bulldozer with "field expedient" armor with Nahr al Barid battle damage, which included holes in the armor plating from projectiles. (NOTE: Embassy has requested, through USCENTCOM, four D9 Armored bulldozers via FY-08 "Tranche Four" 1206 funding. END NOTE.)

¶4. (C) At the last site of the visit, the Hammana Base in the

mountains above Aley, the Charge observed a training demonstration of the LAF's mine detecting dogs in a live minefield. She also inspected their training facilities and kennel, which has recently been refurbished by U.S. funds executed and supervised by DynCorp. The dogs are acquired and initially trained by NGO donations, notably the Marshall Legacy Institute, and further trained and maintained by LAF soldiers. This LAF program began in 2001 and periodically receives new dogs to replace those dogs who are retired due to age.

COMMENT

¶5. (C) U.S.-supported demining in Lebanon has been very successful. The Lebanese Armed Forces have been cooperative, technically proficient and grateful for U.S. support. Continued USG demining efforts help improve the image of the U.S. in southern Lebanon, the area hardest hit during the 2006 Lebanese-Israeli conflict. Charge's June 30 visit to review U.S.-funded demining programs received widespread, positive media coverage on July 1. End Comment.

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